

WYATT, CLAUDE W.

Notes on some of the Birds of the United States of Columbia.

Ibis, 1871, pp. 113-131, 319-335, 373-384, plate v.

In the first portion of this paper the author's route is described and is also set out on an accompanying map (plate v.). The varieties of altitude, climate, and vegetation of that portion of the eastern slope of the valley of the Magdalena visited by Mr. Wyatt is also fully entered into. In the list of birds, mention is made of 210 species, specimens of all of which were obtained, and their names determined by Messrs. Sclater and Salvin. Though several species of considerable interest came under Mr. Wyatt's observation, the chief importance of the list consists in the accurate localities given to all the species mentioned. Amongst the notes are the following corrections of synonymy :—*Turdus fulviventris*, Scl., = *T. euryzonus*, Du Bus ; *Saltator flavidicollis*, Scl., = *S. olivascens*, Cab. ; *Cassicus vitellinus*, Lawr., = *C. flavicrissus*, Scl. ; *Trogon eximius*, Lawr., = *T. chionurus*, Scl. and Salv.

XLV.—Letters, Announcements, &c.

We have received the following letters addressed to "The Editor of 'The Ibis'":—

24th June, 1872.

SIR,—Amongst the more interesting additions that I made during a recent trip to Scinde, to our Indian avifauna, are the following :—*Anas marmorata* (very common), *Columba livia* (rare), ? *Larus dominicanus* (common), *L. hemprichi* (common), *Pyrrhula githaginea* (common), *Podiceps nigricollis* (rare), *Pterocles lichtensteini* (rare), *P. guttatus* (very common), *P. coronatus* (rare), ? *Sylvia cetti* (common), *Thalasseus cantiaica* (common), ? *Tringa crassirostris* (common). Those with a note of interrogation prefixed may be doubtful—but if not what I have designated them, are new to science.

Then I got numerous specimens of *Certhilauda desertorum*, *Haliaetus albicilla*, *Laticilla burnesi*, *Limosa rufa*, *Pratincola leucura*, *Picus scindeanus*, *Brachypterus dilutus*, *Pelecanus crispus*, *Phaëton æthereus*, *Saxicola kingi* (nobis), *Phylloscopus*

neglectus (nobis), *Sylvia delicatula*, *Thalasseus bengalensis*, *T. cristatus*, *Phalaropus fulicarius*, *Calidris arenaria*, *Terekia cinerea*, *Sylvia melanopogon*—besides a Swift, a *Cotyle*, and a *Lestris*, none of which I know and which may be new.

I hope before long to publish, in a separate form, my notes on the ornithology of Scinde, which I have worked very thoroughly, bringing away 1500 skins.

Yours &c.,

A. O. HUME.

Assensole, India, 10th July, 1872.

DEAR SIR,—I wish to make a few remarks upon Mr. Hume's six new species described in 'The Ibis' for April 1872, p. 107.

1. *CHRYSOMITRIS THIBETANA*.—Is a true Siskin; but I am not sure of its distinctness from *C. spinus* ♀. I think it would have been better if Mr. Hume had reserved this bird till he had an opportunity of comparing it with female specimens of *C. spinus*. When I was at Simla, we had nothing to compare it with but the descriptions of Macgillivray and Yarrell.

C. spinoides is not a Siskin, but a Greenfinch allied to *C. chloris*. Like the latter bird, it has no regular song; but its call-notes are very similar to those of its ally. In Cashmere I did not observe *C. spinoides* after passing the first (or Pir-Punjal) snowy range of the Himalayas.

2. *DUMETICOLA CYANOCARPA*.—We certainly made a mistake in thinking that a *Dumeticola* could have any blue about it. Mr. Hume's bird belongs to some other genus, and is much closer to *Brachypteryx* than to *Dumeticola*. To the best of my recollection I did not agree to this bird being classed as a *Dumeticola*.

The *Dumeticola* I procured in Cashmere was not *D. affinis*, but a species an inch longer and with a much longer bill. It has been described in the 'Journal of the Asiatic Society,' part ii. no. 1, 1872, p. 77, as *Dumeticola major*. When I misnamed this bird "*D. affinis*," I had not seen Mr. Hodgson's drawing of that species. By "*D. affinis*" Mr. Hume refers to my birds; for neither of us had then seen the true *D. affinis*.

3. *HORORNIS ERYTHROGENYS*.—Appeared to me to be a good

species. None of Mr. Hodgson's birds of this genus is so rufous.

4. *HOREITES BRUNNESCENS*.—I remember this bird, and most decidedly differ from Mr. Hume. The bill is much more pointed than that of *Horeites*; and I think the bird should be the type of a new genus. It is a good species, I think.

5. *SIPHIA MINUTA* is *Siphia tricolor*, Hodgson. My specimens, miscalled "*Siphia tricolor*," to which Mr. Hume refers, were immature males of *S. leucomelanura*. The latter bird and also *Ianthia rufilata* breed in immature dress precisely resembling that of the female. I did not know this when I labelled young male specimens of *S. leucomelanura* as *S. tricolor*. As soon as I saw Mr. Hodgson's drawing, I perceived my mistake, and that Mr. Hume's new species agreed very well with *S. tricolor*.

Some of Mr. Hume's "total lengths" are taken from the skins only, and are thus apt to mislead. I could not imagine a *Siphia* as small as a *Regulus*, and having a wing 2.2 inches long. In *Siphia* a wing of this length belongs to a bird $4\frac{3}{4}$ or 5 inches long. I examined Mr. Hume's bird; and it was quite as large as my specimens of *S. leucomelanura*.

Very little is known of Mr. Hodgson's *Siphia tricolor*; and it is probable that the mature male will prove to be a blue-plumaged bird.

6. *DRYMOIPIUS RUFESCENS* is a good species. It breeds sparingly at the old Fort at Etawah. In Bundelcund it is much more common. It varies excessively in size.

I remain

Yours faithfully,

W. E. BROOKS.

Lismullen, Navan, Aug. 12, 1872.

SIR,—As *Elanus melanopterus* (or, as it should rather be called, *E. caeruleus*) is not, I think, included in the list of British birds, and I have a British specimen in my possession, I think the occurrence is worth noticing. I received the skin in a very rough state, filled out with hay, from Dr. P. Nicolls, of Navan, who thought it was a Pied Hawk. This you will see from

the copy I enclose you of a letter received from Dr. Nicolls, who had the skin from the time it was shot until he gave it to me. I have no doubt as to the species, having not only compared it with the plate in Gould's 'Birds of Europe,' but also having shown it to Mr. A. G. More—who pronounced it to be an immature specimen, from the brown feathers on the breast.

I have the honour to be, Sir,

Your obedient servant,

JOHN F. DILLON.

[Copy of Letter.]

Belmount, Navan, 29th Nov., 1865.

"DEAR SIR,—It is about ten years since the bird I sent you was killed at Harristown Bay, near Beauparc, by Mr. Horin, of Navan, who killed a Bittern on the same day. I looked upon it as a Pied Hawk, and preserved it.

"Yours sincerely,

"To J. F. Dillon."

"P. NICOLLS."

SIR,—In the 'Proceedings of the Asiatic Society of Bengal,' no. v. May 1872, pp. 70, 71, will be found the description of a Falconine bird, termed a "Merlin," from Thayet-Myo, by Mr. A. O. Hume, and entitled by that gentleman *Lithofalco* (!) *fieldeni*, or Fielden's Merlin. The species in question belongs to the remarkable genus *Polihierax*, Kaup, founded for the reception of the African *Falco semitorquatus*, Smith (Illustr. S.-Afr. Zool. Aves, pl. 1), and of which *Hypotriorchis castanotus*, Heuglin (Ibis, 1860, p. 407), is the male (Cf. Sclater, Ibis, 1861, p. 346, pl. 12). The strongly graduated rectrices, the double-notched maxillæ, the powerful legs, and the peculiar colouring of the plumage, differing also in the sexes, fully entitle the two known species to generic distinction. The occurrence of this African generic form in Burmah is of the highest interest, more especially when considered together with the fact of *Machæramphus* being also represented in the Malay peninsula. I have little hesitation in identifying Mr. Hume's new Merlin, notwithstanding the genus he has classed it under, as *Polihierax insignis*, mihi (P. Z. S. part iii. 1871, p. 627, ex Burmah).

In the 'Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal,' part ii. no. 1, 1872, p. 76, Mr. W. E. Brooks informs us that "the males of *Erythrostera parva*, in the breeding-plumage, have the red on the breast bordered on each side by a stripe of velvet black. In the winter the black border disappears," &c. This somewhat startling fact would have, anyhow, inclined me to conjecture that Mr. Brooks had met with another species; but, fortunately, I have lately had an opportunity of examining one of Mr. Brooks's specimens of his so-called *E. parva* in nuptial plumage. It turned out to be *Siphia (Menetica) hyperythra*, Cabanis (Journ. für Orn. 1866, p. 391), ex Ceylon, where other examples have been since obtained by Mr. Holdsworth. It may be added that the species seems to be only a winter resident in Ceylon, but that it never loses the black pectoral stripes.

Yours, &c.,

WALDEN.

Chislehurst, Aug. 27th, 1872.

SIR,—Mr. Andrew Anderson, in the first part of his valuable paper "On the Raptorial Birds of India," published in the 'Proceedings of the Zoological Society of London' for 1871, p. 685, calls attention to the difference observed by himself and by another zealous student of Indian ornithology, Mr. W. E. Brooks, between the form of the nostril in *Aquila imperialis* and in *A. nævioides*. I must admit that, for one, I have not hitherto paid sufficient attention to this mode of diagnosis between these two species,—an omission which has partly arisen from the difference being less obvious in specimens that have been long prepared than in those in which the parts in question are recent and less desiccated—the fact being that, in specimens of *A. nævioides* which have been prepared many years, the shape of the nostril becomes modified by long drying, and approaches much nearer to that of *A. imperialis* than is the case in recently killed *A. nævioides*.

My present object in adverting to this subject is to correct an error contained in a letter addressed by myself to 'The Ibis' on February 8th, 1871, in which I mentioned that two Spanish

Eagles preserved in the Norwich Museum, for which Dr. R. Brehm proposed the name of *Aquila adalberti*, and also a third Spanish Eagle, then in the collection of Mr. J. H. Gurney, Jun., by whom it was subsequently presented to the Norwich Museum, were in my opinion specimens of *A. navioides*.

I have recently reexamined these specimens, with especial reference to the mode of diagnosis suggested by Mr. Anderson, and, after doing so, have arrived at the conclusion that all three are, in reality, examples of *Aquila imperialis* in immature dress, greatly faded by exposure to sun and weather.

I shall therefore feel obliged by your insertion of this correction, and am indebted to the two ornithologists to whom I have already referred for calling attention to the subject.

I am yours &c.,

J. H. GURNEY.

Totnes, 9th September, 1872.

SIR,—So little appears to be known about the range of *Emberiza huttoni*, Blyth, that it may be worth while to record the fact of the species having been obtained in China. According to Jerdon, this Bunting is only certainly known from the north-west of India, although it may be an occasional straggler to the western part of that country. Its occurrence, therefore, so far east as Canton is of some interest. The specimen which came into my hands was killed by my friend Mr. Samuel Bligh, now in Ceylon; and by some accident, either there or in England, this bird (having no label) was placed with specimens of Ceylonese origin instead of with those collected in China. As no Bunting had yet been obtained in Ceylon, I sent the skin back to Mr. Bligh asking for information about it; for it was not desirable to include it in my 'Catalogue of the Birds of Ceylon' without good authority. He writes to me, in reply:—"I recognized the Bunting at once; I shot it in a dry paddy-field to the north-east of Fatshan, in the province of Canton, China, in December 1868. There were many species in the field; and I think I shot four kinds that morning. They were

scattered all over the field, in small parties. I thought this one was an immature Ortolan."

Mr. Bligh has never been in India, and is not acquainted with Indian birds generally; so that I have no doubt he is correct in what he says of the history of this specimen.

I will only add that Mr. H. E. Dresser has kindly examined the skin for me, and is quite satisfied that it is a female of *Emberiza huttoni*, Blyth.

Yours, very truly,

E. W. H. HOLDSWORTH.

11 Osnaburg Street,
23rd September, 1872.

We regret to have to add another name to the already heavy list of deaths which have occurred amongst ornithologists during the past year. Sir Andrew Smith, whose name is so familiar in connexion with the ornithology of South Africa, died in London in August last, being in his 75th year. His services to ornithology are of an important nature; and his work on the Zoology of South Africa contains the first connected account of the Birds of Cape Colony and the adjoining countries. He contributed also several articles on the Birds of the same districts to the 'South-African Quarterly Journal.' On the completion of this work, Sir A. Smith's opportunities for active interest in ornithology seem to have become exhausted; for during the later years of his life he did not again resume the subject, pressing official duties probably affording him but little leisure for such pursuits.

The materials for his great work were collected between the years 1821 and 1838; and many of the skins he obtained still exist in various museums. The work in question contains many original descriptions; and though its completeness has since been impaired by the observations of numerous other explorers, it will ever remain perhaps the most important contribution to South-African Ornithology.